721 Mahmud of Sulaimaniya, whose several rebellions against the British earned him the unofficial title of 'Director of Training of the R.A.F.' He gave the Royal Air Force practice in operations spread over twelve years. The British method of limited air bombardment after due warning suits the ideas of the chivalrous Kurd in war: to the Kurd it is one of the things that are 'not done' to kill too many people. Shaikh Mahmud and his merry men would set off on the warpath and fight for a few months until they began to suffer discomforts, then give in until the restless highland spirit once more urged them on. Sometimes people got killed, but that was one of the misfortunes of the game. During one rebellion, when a British aircraft was brought down near Penjwin, Shaikh Mahmud captured its two occupants and held them prisoner for a fort-

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727 night. When they became sick he gave a British doctor safe-conduct through his mountains to succour them. The doctor told Shaikh Mahmud that they could not hope to get fit suffering the hardships of life among the Kurds; so the chivalrous Shaikh released them both, and allowed the doctor to take them back with him.

I remember visiting the village of Hama Rashid, Agha of Norik, chief of the Siwêl tribe, who had at one time thrown in his lot with the restless Shaikh Mahmud. As a result his village had been bombed. I was seated on the ground in the moonlight while the chief and his sons and followers sat around with their rifles ready to defend me should any sporting bandit start sniping from the nearby hills; they described to me the bombing of their village.

• 726 They laughingly related how they had
727 been warned that their village would be bombed until they gave in—or made their

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726 727 *dakhalet* (as it is called). They described in stirring tones how they retired to some caves a couple of hundred yards from the village and watched the bombs falling on their homes. The only fly in the ointment was that it was their own houses being destroyed and not somebody else's. Apparently they regarded the affair with some amusement, and themselves as naughty boys who had been punished by having to rebuild their houses afterwards. It had taken them two months' hard work to rearrange the village before the onset of winter; so they decided that in future they would not be led astray by promise of excitement unless they were on the side of the British.

527 857 Another example of the sporting spirit of the Kurds and their disregard for safety is shown in the great sling fights which take place between the children of adjacent villages or of different parts of

[text continued on p.392(A)]

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Kurdish music is nevertheless played on a pipe

resembling the chanter of a bagpipe and has often a pleasant life. Kurdish dancing, however, is by no means as strenuous as Scottish. Kurds and all other mountain dwellers in Kurdistan dance what is known as the chain-dance, similar to that which is, I believe, commonly seen in the Balkans. The dancers join hands and form a ring. The piper and a drummer with a sort of tenor drum stand in the middle, and the dance consists of fairly intricate footwork while the circle moves slowly round. Often star dancers who fancy themselves as budding Nijinskys do solo dances inside the circle. Amongst the Kurds the men and women dance separately, but with the Christian sects the two sexes dance together. This does not mean, however, that Kurdish women are completely segregated or kept by themselves. As a matter of fact, they possess considerable freedom and may be seen gathering firewood, tending animals or engaged in other tasks on the mountainside, often far from their villages.

Up to five years ago the Barzan district of Kurdistan retained all of its savage and primitive features. Government had not penetrated and Shaikh Ahmed, a religious fanatic, was dictator. With the help of his brothers and a standing army of several hundred men he completely dominated the impoverished inhabitants, who had the shaikh's bodyguard perpetually billeted on them and who had to provide them with food, clothing and tobacco and anything else they might fancy. Any protests on the part of the villagers were discouraged by the strongest methods. Such complete ascendancy did Shaikh Ahmed gain over his savage and illiterate people that they began to look upon him as a god and, though Muslims in name, turned their faces towards him in prayer rather than towards Mecca, as tradition demands. There was a Mullah in the district called Mullah Juj, who represented himself to be the prophet of this new god. The Mullah was a very fiery and eloquent speaker and, unfortunately for himself, his fame began to surpass even that of the deity. This could not of course be tolerated, and one of Shaikh Ahmed's brothers "bumped off" the presumptuous prophet. Up to that time the Koran had been revered, but now the Shaikh issued orders for the destruction of all copies to be found. He also withdrew the ban on the eating of pork, for wild pig were plentiful in Barzan. Armed missionaries were sent out beyond the Barzan bounds, and villages which refused to accept the Shaikh were burned and a number of the male inhabitants put to death. This state of affairs could not be allowed to continue, and the 'Iraq Government was forced to take action in conjunction with the British Royal Air Force.